

VZCZCXRO9291
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0247/01 0301402
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 301402Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1485
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000247

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ANBARI CANDIDATES' FRET ABOUT ELECTION FRAUD,
INTIMIDATION

Classified By: A/DCM Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Anbari Provincial Council (PC) elections candidates and the Governorate Elections Officer (GEO) recently detailed concerns to poloffs about potential campaign irregularities and/or electoral intimidation, especially by Iraqi Police (IP). Two candidates protested that Al Anbar television station (province-owned and run) unfairly favored the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and incumbent Governor Ma'amoun. Most expected a small amount of election-related violence, but none thought that any of the above concerns would mar the elections process or results. We heard no significant reports of election candidates or their supporters being harassed or campaign events being disrupted. Further, none of the candidates gave any indication that they would lodge significant protests after the election to discount election results. Post believes that the allegations of campaign transgressions are for the most part minor or unfounded, and that they will not call into question the credibility and legitimacy of elections in Anbar. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) Poloff met separately with Anbar GEO Khalid Rajab and several candidates running in the Anbar provincial elections in Ramadi and Baghdad January 18, and January 24-26. Sheikh Hamid Al Heiss (Al Anbar Salvation Council party, Iraqi Tribal Front coalition), traveled to Baghdad to speak with us. Sheikh Daher Hameed Awad Sulayman (Conference of the Awakening of Iraq party (MSI, the "Sahwa"), Anbar coalition), Khamis Abtan (Deputy Anbar PC Chair, representing Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), running with the Coalition of Intellectuals and Tribes for Development CITD), Dr. Jassim Al Halboosi, (National Dialogue Front party (Dialogue), Iraqi National Project Alliance coalition), Mohammed Fatha and Nehal Ahmad Salih (National Movement for Reform and Development party (NMRD), no coalition), Hajji Hamid Al Uwaid (independent candidate) all traveled to Camp Ramadi. Poloffs met Khalid in his office in downtown Ramadi.

ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES

3. (C) All of our contacts accused members of other parties of tearing down their campaign posters. Sheikh Hamid Al Heiss (Al Anbar Salvation) alleged that IIP was preparing to forge ballots in Fallujah. Mohammed Fatha (NMRD) worried that IIP would send its supporters to polling centers to create a disturbance in the hope of having that polling center's votes declared tainted and disqualified. Hajji Hamid Al Uwaid accused current PC members of using official government vehicles for campaign purposes.

4. (C) Sheikh Daher Sulyaman (MSI) claimed also that other parties are giving away gifts, money, and food in an effort to win votes. He claimed specifically that IIP representatives from Baghdad were giving away civil service jobs in the Electricity Ministry in Anbar as a way of gaining votes. (NOTE: NMRD candidate Mohammed Fatha told poloffs that his party was giving away inexpensive watches and pens

as part of their campaigning. END NOTE).

15. (C) While not a specific election irregularity, Khalid Rajab worried about an article appearing on January 25 in a newspaper owned by the Gathering of Scholars and Intellectuals in Iraq that criticized the GEO and the electoral process as a whole. The article alleged that votes are selling for USD 1,000 each. While not overly concerned about the article, its timing did concern Khalid, as it was published the week before elections. (Comment: we doubt that any political party operating in Anbar could afford USD 1,000 per vote. End Comment.)

16. (C) The GEO also noted that the town of Rutbah was not permitting its court or hospital employees to participate in the election as polling center workers. However, Khalid was confident that the issue would be resolved before election day.

FEARS OF MALIGN IRAQI POLICE (IP) INFLUENCE

17. (C) Several candidates expressed suspicions about the IP's behavior during the campaign and on election day. Nehal Ahmad Salih (NMRD) alleged that IP has more allegiance to tribes in the local areas where they are employed than to the law or the government. He accused IP members themselves of tearing down NMRD campaign posters. Mohammed Fatha (NMRD) feared that IP might intimidate voters at polling centers; he revealed that poll workers have asked NMRD for support and protection if IP should interfere at voting centers on

BAGHDAD 00000247 002 OF 002

election day. Hajji Al Uwaid (independent) echoed the claims of IP tearing posters and potential IP bias at polling centers.

18. (C) Khamis Abtan (IIP/CITD) complained strenuously about the IP and the necessity for observers to monitor them. Specifically, he thought that IP would not feel obliged to follow rules forbidding them from entering polling stations (the voting booth area within polling centers).

19. (C) GEO Khalid noted that the IP were not yet completely professional and were not educated, but he did not think that they would significantly influence the elections in any party's favor.

AL ANBAR TELEVISION

110. (C) Mohammed Fatha (NMRD) grumbled that Al Anbar television was the only TV station that would not air the party's campaign info. They contended that the station refused to cover any PC candidates other than incumbent Governor Ma'amoun "God bless him," Mohammed smiled. Sheikh Daher Sulayman (MSI) elaborated, charging that Al Anbar TV is devoted exclusively to IIP (and related parties) candidates. Sheikh Daher further claimed that televised presentations of Ma'amoun announcing new projects and job opportunities are another form of campaigning.

COMMENT

111. It is noteworthy that only Hajji Al Uwaid thought that there would be potential for significant violence on election day in Anbar. Most thought that there could be scattered violence, but nothing serious or widespread. Post believes that although the candidates feel strongly about their claims, none of the allegations would undermine the credibility or legitimacy of the provincial elections.

Instead, many of the complaints centered around posters being torn down. We heard no significant reports of election candidates or their supporters being harassed or campaign events being disrupted. Further, none of the candidates gave any indication that they would lodge significant protests after the election to discount election results. The candidates may be making the charges in the heat of the campaign, with tensions heightening as election day looms.
END COMMENT.

CROCKER